

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**  
**OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES TRADE REPRESENTATIVE**

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**U.S. and Mexican Agriculture Trade Officials  
Launch Regular Forum to Resolve Trade Differences**

WASHINGTON - Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman and U.S. Trade Representative Robert B. Zoellick announced today that officials from the United States and Mexico held the first meeting of a bilateral forum recently created to consult on agricultural trade disputes and areas of concern.

Established in April 2002 by Veneman, Zoellick, and their Mexican counterparts, the Consultative Committee on Agriculture (CCA) is designed to bring officials together within a regular forum to address bilateral trade concerns early, prevent disruptions in trade and resolve problems before they develop into larger, more formal disputes.

“The U.S.-Mexico CCA is helping strengthen and expand our bilateral trade relationship,” said Veneman. “We have a strong partnership with Mexico, which is an important market for American farm and food products. We look forward to continuing our efforts through this working group to resolve trade issues.”

“American farmers and American consumers both benefit from agricultural trade with Mexico. I’m pleased that agriculture trade teams from both countries will meet regularly to talk about problems and concerns so that we can try to smooth out any differences,” said Zoellick. “Mexico is a good friend of the United States and as friends, we should strive to resolve our differences amicably and in a constructive manner.”

The purview of the CCA encompasses important trade issues such as market access, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, and information exchanges in areas such as biotechnology and animal and plant health. A. Ellen Terpstra, administrator of the Foreign Agricultural Service, and James Murphy, assistant USTR for Agricultural Affairs, led the U.S. delegation to CCA, which met in Mexico City, Mexico.

At the meeting, negotiators discussed the significant progress that has been made on the CCA action plan, including progress on many sanitary and phytosanitary issues. For example, U.S. and Mexican technical officials have moved forward on protocols for the export of U.S. potatoes and

California stone fruit. Mexico has published a final rule eliminating oversight requirements for northwest stone fruit from the United States. USDA has published proposed rules affecting pork, poultry, figs, and mango exports from Mexico. Both countries are working together on a bilateral assessment report on opportunities and obstacles for U.S. and Mexican pork and poultry sectors, and a harmonization initiative on import procedures and documentation.

Additionally, the first CCA meeting was used by the U.S. delegation to again voice strong concerns over the Mexican government's recent antidumping decisions on certain U.S. commodities, such as apples, rice, swine and beef.

Since the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was approved in 1993, two-way trade between the United States and Mexico has grown to nearly \$13 billion. Today, Mexico is the third largest market for U.S. agricultural products, accounting for nearly 14 percent of total U.S. agricultural exports. The United States is the most important market for Mexican agricultural exports.

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